

# Pass the Community Planning Act

## S. 1193 & H. 175

Part of what makes Massachusetts a great place to live and do business is our varied and vibrant landscapes: from the beaches and grasslands of Cape Cod to the forests and mountains of the Berkshires.

Along with our natural beauty, our character is shaped by our diverse collection of large and small communities. Vibrant cities and suburbs provide contrast and balance to rural towns and village centers.

Unfortunately, haphazard development is threatening the distinctive character that we value so highly. Poorly-planned growth across the state results in high housing costs, habitat and farmland loss, and strained municipal budgets.

In fact, Massachusetts was recently listed by the American Planning Association as having one of the most antiquated state land use laws in the country. Eliminating confusing and outdated language will make it easier for volunteer boards to interpret the law, and reduce litigation.

**With the Community Planning Act (CPA II), the Commonwealth has the opportunity to update its land use laws, allowing all communities – large and small – to effectively plan for their future.**



*The ability to assess impact fees and grant appropriate variances can help cities like New Bedford maintain walkable centers, offering residents and visitors pleasant places to shop, stroll and dine.*

### **The Community Planning Act will:**

- Provide communities with effective tools to plan for and support new growth, including impact fees.
- Make it easier to change outdated zoning, and assure that zoning is consistent with a community's adopted master plan.
- Foster housing affordability and diversity.
- Improve local regulatory procedures and increase flexibility in zoning and permitting, making variances available to more homeowners and small businesses.
- Close loopholes that undermine planning, such as Approval Not Required (ANR) lots. ANR exempts the creation of roadside lots from local review – even on substandard roads. The linear growth patterns that result inefficiently consume land and strain community services.

# What can we accomplish with the Community Planning Act?

Cities and towns today are guided by land use laws that originated in the 1950s. These outdated laws are no longer effectively serving the Commonwealth.

Communities that adopt comprehensive and innovative master plans often cannot follow through because of state zoning laws that stand in the way.

The **Community Planning Act** will benefit communities of all sizes:

- Cities and towns will gain options to pro-actively encourage more affordable homes and pay for the added services needed to support new growth.
- By closing loopholes that undermine planning – such as Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivisions and excessive grandfathering – rural towns and growing suburbs will have the tools to curtail poorly-planned roadside developments and implement their master plans.

**For more information, including the full text of the bill, visit:**  
[massmunilaw.org](http://massmunilaw.org) and click on  
**“Massachusetts Zoning Reform”**



*CPA II would make it easier for communities to facilitate compact subdivisions like this one in Lincoln, which included affordable units and open space preservation.*



*The rural character of towns like Russell is integral to Massachusetts' appeal, yet many are threatened by poorly planned growth.*

**The Community Planning Act enjoys the support of  
56 co-sponsors in the legislature and over 100 municipalities and  
organizations.**

**Pass S. 1193 / H. 175 this session!**

**For more information:  
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